

External Peer Review Group:

Final Report

Faculty of Law
University of Iceland

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1 Summary of findings

Below are some of the main findings of the external peer review group (PRG), which the group decided to file into recommendations to the ministry of education, to University of Iceland (UI) authorities and to the UI law faculty. Further summary of PRG conclusions and recommendations are to be found at the end of each chapter of the report.

■ **Recommendations to the Ministry of education, science and culture:**

- Ensure an environment where all higher education institutions have equal opportunities to develop, although in a competitive setting. The PRG received indications that faculty authorities felt the current environment favored so-called private institutions. Bearing in mind the special status of the UI law faculty, for instance regarding the creation and renewal of Icelandic legal culture, such reservations should be considered seriously by the ministry.
- Encourage co-operation between Icelandic higher education institutions. The UI faculty of law displayed interest in co-operating with other Icelandic law faculties in their chosen areas of specialization.
- Consider that the faculty seems underfunded

■ **Recommendations to University of Iceland authorities:**

- Assist the faculty to respond effectively to the changes in the higher education environment
- Address the serious deficit in administrative support in the faculty
- Promote the establishment of a graduate programme within the faculty
- Adopt a programme of action to redress the institutionalised underfunding of the law faculty
- Develop mechanisms for regular, even annual, review and/or progress reports of faculty development plans (5-year plans)

■ **Recommendations to the Faculty of Law:**

- Adopt a mission statement to include, inter alia, substantive reference to the faculty's commitment to serve the social, economic, political and cultural needs of all sections of the Icelandic community, and to make a distinctive Icelandic contribution to the development of an international legal, political and economic order which will enhance the rights and needs of current and future generations. The broad mission statement should be complemented by more detailed objectives and a detailed strategy to implement the mission and achieve the objectives. The strategy must include provision for formal

mechanisms to evaluate faculty progress in delivering on its mission statement and objectives at regular intervals.

- Aggressively market its strengths, with particular emphasis on: excellence in the core subjects of an academic law degree; a broad based academic legal education; centre of research excellence in international and environmental law; relevance to all sections of the Icelandic community; and strong academic links with law schools in Europe.
- Consider transparent and direct selection procedures of new students with regard also to social equality
- Enhance the interdisciplinary dimension of research and teaching
- Encourage the development of one or two niche research areas which have real potential to establish the law faculty as an internationally recognised centre of research excellence in the area(s) concerned. This can best be done by encouraging faculty to contribute to a common theme (e.g. international environmental law) from their own individually chosen areas of research interest/specialisation.
- Take concrete steps to further integrate undergraduate students in the research activity of the faculty
- Actively promote the establishment of a graduate programme at the faculty, creating a research-oriented environment driven by Ph.D. students and members of faculty, and utilizing the faculty's international network
- Introduce a greater emphasis on the principle of peer-review, for instance in student assessment and teaching methods
- Systematically improve both resources available and services provided (f.ex. opening-hours) by the faculty library
- Utilize fully the possibilities of regular staff interviews for human resource management within the faculty
- Maintain and strengthen the international outlook of the faculty adopted in recent years

2 Introduction

This document represents the final report of the external peer review group (PRG) for the higher education external review of the University of Iceland, Faculty of Law. This exercise was performed on the basis of rules on quality control in higher education nr. 666/2003 (see appendix A.2) and encompassed the BA, Cand. Juris and LL.M. programmes within the faculty. The stated objectives of quality control in higher education are:

- to maintain and raise the quality of teaching in higher education institutions (HEIs)
- to improve the organization of HEIs
- to promote greater responsibility of HEIs for their own activities
- to ensure their competitiveness in the international arena

The PRG was appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture and consisted of the following individuals:

- Bjarni Benediktsson, Attorney to the District Court of Iceland. The chair of the peer review group.
- Svali H. Björgvinsson, Human Resource Manager at KB Bank, Iceland.
- Thomas Wilhelmsson, Professor and Vice Rector of the University of Helsinki.
- Dermot Walsh, Professor of the University of Limerick Law School.
- Unnar Hermannsson, KPMG Consulting Iceland, secretary of the group

The PRG held numerous meetings before, during and following the site-visit to the faculty of law. The site-visit encompassed meetings with university authorities, the faculty self-evaluation group, tenured and non-tenured faculty staff, current and graduated students in addition to a guided tour of faculty facilities (see appendix A.3). The PRG was satisfied with the evaluation process, while gaps in the faculty self-evaluation report put undue time pressure on meetings, particularly with the self-evaluation group.

While recognizing that guidelines from the ministry limited the length of the faculty self-evaluation report, the PRG was in some aspects disappointed with the rather general approach and often vague conclusions of the report, especially lacking in statistical support, for example regarding student progression and faculty research activity, and more concise presentation in general. This caused some difficulties for the PRG. However, the PRG recognizes that this is to a large extent caused by the lack of administrative resources.

The PRG is aware that the faculty is operating within a very distinct environment: An island society with a small population base, where the faculty has been an integral part in developing the legal environment, since before the establishment of the Republic. Thus the PRG is aware of the special status of the faculty in Icelandic society and urges relevant authorities to take that under special consideration when analyzing the current higher education environment in Iceland, where new institutions have been established in recent years, some with increasing emphasis on legal studies.

At the same time it is necessary for the faculty to constantly re-evaluate its role and the contribution that it can make to: Icelandic society, to the understanding of Icelandic law and to the development of its international profile. The PRG believes the faculty has been working hard in recent years to revise both its aims and practices with the support of university authorities. This process was given an increased sense of urgency by the introduction of competition in legal education. It is the general consensus of the PRG that the faculty has been moving in the correct direction, but more work still lays ahead. It is the sincere hope of the PRG that this report may assist faculty authorities in that work.

To this end the PRG has deliberately attempted to maintain this report as concise and pragmatic as possible, emphasizing actions for faculty consideration to develop further, while not for instance repeating, or discussing in great length materials contained in the faculty self-evaluation report or other documents relating to this exercise (see appendix A.4). It is the belief of the PRG that this approach will prove the most beneficial for both faculty and university authorities, in addition to the Ministry of education.

It was similarly a conscious decision of the group to base its findings exclusively on formally presented and prepared documents for the PRG, which in turn formed the basis for the site-visit. Other materials, that due to some reasons did not fulfill these criteria, have not been considered within the scope of this project.

Finally the PRG would like to thank all relevant actors for their co-operation during this exercise, which was in all instances enjoyable. Special thanks are extended to the faculty self-evaluation group, and the faculty dean, as well as university authorities, for their hospitality and positive approach towards this project.

3 Faculty policy and objectives

The approach adopted by the faculty towards educating Icelandic lawyers can be characterized as being broad in perspective. As the faculty was the only law faculty in Iceland until fairly recently this approach is understandable. However, with recent changes in its environment the PRG believes it to be important to put emphasis on formulating a clear policy, set of objectives and an action plan to reach those objectives, to focus all faculty resources on a common goal which in turn will be the best way to achieve success in this new national higher education landscape as well as in the internationalized academic environment.

The PRG believes that the faculty needs to improve its official policy with emphasis on making it more concise as opposed to a more general and vague approach. The PRG agrees with the faculty that its emphasis on offering the most demanding academic law study in Iceland with a firm basis in the Icelandic law tradition, in addition to an international focus is the correct way forward for the faculty and therefore should be reflected more directly in its official policy. Similarly, there needs to be a more concise statement of the purpose of its teaching and research to include, in particular, producing highly educated lawyers to serve the social, economic and political needs of Icelandic society at home and abroad, to serve the needs of social justice and to promote Iceland as a centre of international excellence in the study of law. The vague policy presented in the faculty self-evaluation report left a difficult task for the PRG to assess if the faculty was in fact on the right track to achieve its objectives. Therefore the clearer formulation by the faculty of its policy or mission statement, its objectives and for instance a 5-year-plan on how to reach those objectives is strongly recommended. Discussions with faculty, students and university authorities assured the PRG that all the necessary elements are in place and the faculty is in fact moving in a positive direction, but a formal written verification or statement of that journey is still lacking.

Regarding policy on research the PRG commends the faculty emphasis on research based study and faculty academic freedom, but at the same time believes that in a faculty this small on an international scale more emphasis should be put on most if not all faculty members contributing to one or a few common theme(s) in their research, although individual faculty members will approach any such themes from their own fields of specialization, be it criminal, human rights or environmental law to name but a few examples. Such a common theme could for instance be international environmental law that would, if clearly stated in official faculty policy and objectives, create a platform for an area of excellence which the faculty could market internationally both to attract talent and build an international recognition. The PRG recognizes that the faculty is already moving in this direction with the introduction of the LL.M. course in international and environmental law, but believes that a formal definition of research themes or areas of excellence could prove

beneficial for the faculty in the future and in a faculty its size such themes should not be more than 1-3 in number. The PRG would like to stress that it is no way suggesting that academic freedom of faculty members should be compromised in any way or form. Faculty will of course continue to enjoy absolute academic freedom in their research and publications, choosing the subjects from their own strengths in academic training and practical experience, but it is suggested, towards a common goal or research-pool.

A clear policy on connection between research and teaching is called for. In the self-evaluation report the PRG received rather general information regarding this issue but during the interviews with faculty it was evident that the sights have been set towards a more research-based faculty, which the PRG commends. Again, however, this aim should be more formally described in official faculty policy. Drawing upon the discussions above the PRG recommends drawing a distinct connection between the new LL.M. programme and a coherent research theme. The PRG suggests offering more intensive training for students in research methods, especially bearing in mind the faculty stated emphasis on rigorous academic training and research-based study.

Relating to the faculty tradition on student internships, the PRG applauds that aspect of the studies offered at the faculty but believes that a policy regarding this aspect should be formulated. Discussions with faculty and faculty graduates indicated that there had been no need for special arrangements regarding internships in the past, as students had no difficulty in finding placements. However, with the increased supply of law graduates foreseeable in the near future, this situation might change making it increasingly important to have a clear set of objectives regarding faculty relations with the entities providing internship placements.

Faculty policy on weight of individual study factors is the clearest regarding the BA programme, where the faculty should draw still further strength from their voiced mission of offering the most demanding academic law studies in Iceland. However, the PRG suggests the faculty consider presenting more focus or areas of specialization into the second phase of the studies, i.e. the Cand. Juris and LL.M. programmes. It should be relatively simple for the faculty to offer students more clearly stated paths for their areas of interest in the final two years of their studies. Without jeopardizing the general framework of the study programmes and without proceeding to specializations in graduation titles, the faculty could offer coherent modules or packages for students to prepare for practice in distinct fields, such as business law, or programmes that are otherwise more coherent. Developments in this direction have already been implemented by the faculty but more emphasis in this regard is encouraged. This could prove a good counter against other law programmes.

To achieve this aim the faculty should also continue drawing upon the strength of being a part of the University of Iceland by recommending courses from other faculties. The conscious development by faculty authorities to specialize in legal studies and drop courses that can be taught in other faculties, such as accounting, is understood by the PRG, but should be balanced by a further development of the interdisciplinary cooperation with other faculties. Other disciplines should not only be chosen by students on individual grounds, but also recommended by the faculty as parts of coherent packages.

Similarly the PRG commends the faculty in formulating its programmes on the basis of the Bologna declaration, i.e. the division of studies into a three-year BA and the following two years to complete either the Cand. Juris or LL.M. degrees. This change is a necessary prerequisite for the faculty to develop into a leading law school in its selected sphere. However, a clear policy concerning the tasks and purposes of, and the division of labour between the three programmes should be adopted.

Due to the lack of clearly formulated policy objectives and any form of action plan towards those objectives it is difficult for the PRG to comment on the connections of quality policy with the formal quality assurance system of the university. A formal strategic plan, encompassing for instance a five year period is necessary before any meaningful evaluation can be made concerning this issue. The PRG believes that for instance regarding faculty research activity and student assessment the faculty is following quality procedures in line with university policy.

3.1 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- Present policy too general and vague
- Should put effort into formulating a clear policy, set of objectives, action plan and mechanisms to for regular review
- Emphasis on offering demanding academic law study with firm basis in Icelandic law
- Commendable faculty emphasis on research-based study, which would be strengthened further, and faculty academic freedom
- Commendable faculty adoption of Bologna principles in formulating its study programmes

Recommendations

- Revise faculty policy, with emphasis on more focus, and mission statement. Seek relevant connections to society, f.ex. stating more precisely than currently what kind of lawyers the faculty wants to train for Icelandic society.
- Publish and revise policy and mission statement regularly
- Draft a development plan for the faculty
- More direct commitment of the faculty to Icelandic society in general, and for instance social equality, would be a welcome addition to faculty policy
- Policy on faculty contributing to one or a few common research theme(s) should be adopted
- Objectives of the three programmes should be defined
- A clear policy on connection between research and teaching is called for (possibly a distinct connection between LL.M. and research theme)
- Policy regarding internships should be formulated
- Consider presenting more focus, or areas of specialization, into the second phase of faculty studies, by creating recommended packages
- Continue drawing upon the strength of being a part of the University of Iceland by further recommending interdisciplinary studies, and including them in recommended packages

4 Internal quality assurance of the faculty

It is the perception of the PRG that organization of internal quality evaluation has been and continues to be under development in the faculty, with some aspects such as student course evaluation very advanced while other aspects such as for instance quality of curriculum or analysis of faculty graduates could be improved.

It is the feeling of the PRG that the lack of general faculty policy described in chapter 3 filters directly into the arena of quality assurance. This should be expected as the lack of public, clearly formed objectives and a strategy to work towards those objectives will always make it problematic to effectively measure how well one is progressing. The PRG recognizes that efforts have been made towards implementing a formal quality assurance system in the faculty but believes that too heavily is depended upon informal ways of assessing quality. Further work towards making quality assurance within the faculty more formal, transparent and effective is encouraged.

Although faculty rules, such as those mentioned on p. 12-13 of the self-evaluation report, were not formally presented nor translated for the PRG, it was apparent from discussions with faculty, especially non-tenured staff, that more emphasis should be put on presenting official faculty rules to staff. In addition it would be beneficial for the faculty to review its rules at regular time intervals with the aim of making them as transparent and effective as possible while minimizing scope for individual faculty discretion.

A welcome development was introduced to the group, that of regular staff interviews. This is commended by the PRG and faculty authorities encouraged to make these formal staff interviews an integral part of the faculty quality assurance process, drawing upon in particular results from student course evaluation, staff research effectiveness in addition to any other contributions towards the faculty. It was the perception of the PRG that the university research point system was not very intrusive, with more emphasis on quantity rather than quality control, but that would be an issue for university authorities to address, rather than its individual faculties.

An important element in any quality assurance system is the ability to apply resources towards gathering, analyzing and disseminating statistics on relevant aspects of faculty activity. It seems that the faculty is under-resourced in this regard and therefore an integral prerequisite in any quality system missing to a large extent. The PRG encourages that resources will be made available to the faculty in this regard. For instance the PRG would have expected the faculty to analyze the results from faculty course evaluations compared to other university faculties in more detail than seems to have been the case. Similarly the high, although

traditional, drop-out rate of first year students gives rise for concern that perhaps this method of selecting students into the faculty could in some way benefit certain types of individuals above others. Is the faculty in fact attracting and educating the kinds of lawyers it proclaims, for instance in regard to social equality? The PRG encourages the faculty to look into issues of this sort, which can only prove beneficial for the faculty. There should also be regular follow-ups concerning the employment of the graduates from the faculty.

Although the PRG is impressed by the seemingly wide use of student course evaluation in the faculty and in particular the utilization of IT to reach students and process results, the group was alarmed by the low participation of students in some instances. This could possibly be countered with relatively simple measures such as making participation mandatory on-line. IT measures such as closing student computer home-areas until such surveys are completed are widely known and should be looked into. However the PRG was particularly pleased to hear that both members of faculty as well as students were pleased and comfortable with the principle of course assessments by students.

The PRG would like to encourage the faculty to introduce a larger element of peer-review into the quality assurance process. This has been used [not at all used to the same extent in Nordic universities as in the anglo-saxon ones] in other universities for instance by bringing faculty from other departments to assess teacher performance in class situations, while in other instances external parties from neighboring countries or practicing lawyers could be utilized in this regard.

4.1 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- Organization of internal quality evaluation has been and continues to be under development in the faculty, with some aspects such as student course evaluation very advanced while other less so
- Introduction of regular staff interviews is positive. Important that interviews are performed and administered effectively and become an integral part of the faculty quality assurance system
- Insufficient ability to apply resources towards gathering, analyzing and disseminating statistics on relevant aspects of faculty activity. Faculty seems under-resourced in this regard
- PRG impressed by the seemingly wide use of student course evaluation in the faculty and in particular the utilization of IT to reach students and process results, but alarmed by the low participation of students in some instances
- Positive that both faculty members and students seem aware of importance of effective quality mechanisms

Recommendations

- Make quality assurance within the faculty more formal, transparent and effective. Should pioneer new measures.
- Greater element of peer review suggested, f.ex. bringing in staff from other departments colleagues from Nordic countries and from business could provide external input
- Added emphasis on formal presentation of official faculty rules to staff
- PRG encourages that added administrative resources be made available to faculty towards data gathering capacity and analytic ability

5 Structure and content of study programs

As mentioned previously, the PRG regards the faculty adopting the two-tier Bologna structure a very positive development. The introduction of the LL.M. programme is similarly a commendable project, emphasizing certain themes of particular importance to the faculty. A logical and necessary next step is a formal graduate/doctoral programme within the faculty which would tie together the faculty emphasis on academic excellence and research-based study.

The PRG believes that the objectives to the BA programme should be more clearly stated. Are there any other objectives of the BA than preparing for the Cand. Juris or LL.M. programmes? If the objectives of the BA are not explicitly stated there could develop a danger of the programme losing its identity and for instance following the clearly stated LL.M. focus.

Within the BA programme, a course in international law is suggested, as the BA is a necessary prerequisite for the LL.M. programme in international law. An earlier introduction to international law is therefore suggested, creating a more formal connection between the BA and LL.M. programmes. Similarly a stronger commitment to foreign law materials and comparative law (such as common law and codified systems of law) is encouraged. While the comparative approach has been emphasized within the faculty, it is the firm belief of the PRG that a three-year BA should allow scope, while recognizing the importance of strong grounding in law basics and Icelandic law, for a course in comparative law as well as for more comparative materials within the specific legal subjects. It is very important in today's europeanized and internationalized legal environment and labour market for lawyers. It should also be of particular importance to a faculty seeking international recognition and serving a community heavily dependant upon international trade and an active participant in the global process of internationalization. Also in the Cand.Juris programme more comparative elements would be welcome.

The faculty is to be applauded on recent developments in interdisciplinary studies and is encouraged to go further in that direction seeking linkages with other disciplines such as sociology, philosophy and political science to name a few. Law students in the faculty should be guided by faculty towards suitable combinations of courses as this approach fits the academic study of law, as opposed to so-called black-letter law. One approach the faculty could take in this regard would be to offer an integrated introductory course within the department where relevant linkages to other disciplines could be introduced, perhaps already within the BA programme. Students could then be directed towards the most relevant courses in other university departments if they desire to pursue these linkages further in their studies. If this path is taken it is necessary for the faculty to acknowledge beforehand if

individual courses in other departments are accepted. Such courses from other faculties most naturally could form a part of the Cand.Juris programme.

As previously mentioned the PRG regards the introduction of the LL.M. programme a very positive step in the development of the faculty. The theme is a relevant one and appropriate for an Icelandic law school. An interesting more specialized focus could be international environmental law, if not too specialized. The PRG encourages emphasis on advanced courses in the LL.M. while offering introductory courses within the BA. In an LL.M. programme there should preferably not be much more than a single introductory course, with the intention of bringing students from different academic backgrounds to a common platform for further studies. The PRG would question the commitment of considerable time and energy to basic courses within an LL.M. course.

There seems to be a strong connection between study materials and teaching in the faculty largely due to the fact that faculty members have through the years been expected to produce basic textbooks on relevant aspects of Icelandic law. This service of the faculty to the Icelandic society through the decades deserves praise. Similarly individual members of faculty seem dedicated to offer supporting materials to students, some via the faculty intranet, which seems advanced and deserves special praise from the PRG. The PRG received an enjoyable and informative demonstration of best practice from a faculty member during its site-visit.

5.1 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- Adopting the two-tier Bologna structure is a very positive development, similarly the introduction of the LL.M. programme, emphasizing certain themes of particular importance to the faculty
- The faculty is to be applauded on recent developments in interdisciplinary studies and is encouraged to go further in that direction – f.ex. introduce an introductory course in faculty and integrate courses from other faculties in the programmes
- Service of the faculty to the Icelandic society through writing basic legal textbooks deserves praise
- A logical and necessary next step is a formal graduate/doctoral programme within the faculty

Recommendations

- Explore further interdisciplinary courses, such as “sociology of law”, within the BA, and recommend and integrate courses from other faculties in Cand. Juris packages

- Courses in international law and comparative law suggested within the BA and more comparative materials recommended on all levels of study
- Emphasis should be on advanced courses in the LL.M. programme
- Launch graduate programme within the faculty

6 Teaching and teaching methods

Regarding faculty teaching and teaching methods it is the common general feeling of the PRG that staff are left with much discretion regarding both standards of study materials used and teaching methods in class situations (lectures, seminars or study groups) as well as examination methods. Tenured faculty staff bear overall responsibility of all courses taught within the faculty.

The PRG appreciates the deliberate development of the faculty to increase the use of study groups during the studies, especially on the first year where older students oversee study groups under the guidance of tenured staff member. Students particularly expressed their satisfaction with this change to the PRG. The PRG emphasizes that such groups should be kept manageable in size, preferably not over 20 students in each group. It is important that university authorities support the trend of making teaching methods as engaging and informative as possible by providing pedagogic training to both tenured and non-tenured staff. Similarly it could be beneficial for the faculty to organize hands-on working seminars among staff to display best-practice in teaching methods, for example in the use of IT, organizing study groups or examination techniques.

The seemingly limited faculty emphasis on essay writing, expressed by the student panel in the site-visit, was surprising to the PRG, especially due to the expressed faculty focus on academic study, and therefore suggests the matter should be looked into. However, the recent introduction of a BA-essay is a welcome development in the right direction. The more deliberate use of essays in coursework, for example making an essay necessary in all courses, could for instance be considered as faculty policy.

The PRG recommends increased emphasis on support for students particularly in the first year. If students are to a large extent to be left to their own devices in their studies it is suggested that the faculty offer more training for example in research methods and in the use of the faculty library. The library needs to be an integral part of studies at the faculty, especially as the faculty is aiming towards a more academic, research based approach. The PRG would particularly welcome the introduction of a specific research methodology course in the Cand. Juris as well as the LL.M. programme as they are intended to be research-based. The PRG was however reassured by faculty authorities during its site-visit that a research methods course was planned already for spring semester 2005.

6.1 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- Tenured faculty staff bear overall responsibility of all courses
- Staff are left with much discretion regarding both standards of study materials used and teaching methods in class situations (lectures, seminars or study groups) as well as examination methods
- Deliberate development of the faculty to increase the use of study groups is appreciated

Recommendations

- More faculty direction, f.ex. by publishing faculty standards, regarding study materials used, teaching and assessment methods
- Could be beneficial for the faculty to organize hands-on working seminars among staff to display best-practice in teaching methods, for example in the use of IT, organizing study groups or examination techniques
- Study groups should be kept manageable in size, preferably not over 20 students in each group
- More deliberate use of essays in coursework proposed, for example making an essay necessary in all courses. Could be considered as faculty policy.
- Increased emphasis on support for students recommended, particularly in the first year
- Introduction of a specific research methodology course in the Cand. Juris and LL.M. programmes particularly welcome, as they are intended to be research-based.

7 On-the-job training – Internship

As mentioned in chapter 3 above, the PRG commends the tradition of internships at the faculty as it regards on-the-job training of this sort a valuable aspect of legal education and training.

The faculty has not been active in seeking internships for its students, as this has presumably not proved necessary. This could change in the near future and therefore it is suggested that the faculty makes an effort to formalize or centralize its internship system. The loose, informal organization of the system today raised some questions to the PRG: Is there any quality control of the visits, f.ex. reports by students at the end of their placements?; Is there some faculty policy regarding placements, f.ex. regarding kinship?

The PRG encourages the faculty to organize its contacts with society (business, public and/or government bodies) as these become increasingly important in the newly introduced competitive environment. Strong, even formal, ties with strong actors outside the faculty could prove beneficial and should be supported. Also it is suggested the faculty gather systematic information on destinations of its interns, as this information may prove valuable for faculty authorities to identify trends among students and consequently possibly make relevant adjustments to faculty course content.

7.1 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- Tradition of internships at the faculty commendable
- Necessary to move this tradition to the next level

Recommendations

- Formalize or centralize internship system
- Faculty encouraged to organize its contacts with society
- Gather systematic information on destinations of its interns

8 Student assessment

The PRG has some concerns regarding the apparent degree of flexibility or discretion offered to tenured staff members regarding student assessment. Some sort of minimum requirements or standards regarding student assessment are recommended for all courses within the faculty. This could even be incorporated into faculty policy, f.ex. that all courses should have significant aspects of course work assessment. Class participation is similarly a recognized tool for student assessment in master's level courses (Cand. Juris and LL.M.).

In particular the seemingly varying application of oral exams caused concern for the PRG. In this respect more standardization and greater connection between study material covered and assessment is suggested. Oral assessment should be as transparent as possible, with emphasis on equality of treatment of each individual student and proportionality between course substance and assessment questions. It is suggested that the faculty proposes varied assessment methods among its staff members in their courses.

The PRG commends the recent development of aligning student assessment periods in the faculty with other faculties of the university. External examiners are used by the faculty to review student master's thesis (Cand. Juris and LL.M.) which the PRG regards a good arrangement and towards which faculty students expressed a positive remark.

Tenured staff bear overall responsibility for student assessment in all courses within the faculty. The PRG encourages tenured staff to maintain active oversight of student assessment measures in courses taught by non-tenured teachers under their supervision. Similarly the PRG recommends the faculty consider some sort of quality mechanism towards tenured teachers and their assessment methods. A formal peer review of exams and their contents could be considered by faculty authorities.

8.1 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- Application of oral exams caused concern
- Recent development of aligning student assessment periods in the faculty with other faculties is positive

Recommendations

- Requirements or standards regarding student assessment should be recommended for all courses
- Tenured staff encouraged to maintain active oversight of student assessment measures in courses taught by non-tenured teachers
- Faculty should consider some sort of quality mechanism towards tenured teachers and their assessment methods.

9 Students

Due to a disappointing lack of statistical data provided, the PRG was handicapped in analyzing f.ex. 5-10 year trends in student numbers, number of new enrolments, graduates, student place of residence, gender and/or age. The limited data presented in the faculty self-evaluation report indicated significant fluctuations both in drop-out and progression rates which the PRG was not able to receive a satisfactory explanation to in its opinion.

As previously mentioned it is suggested that the faculty puts increased emphasis on analyzing the background of its law students, f.ex. regarding social background. The PRG believes it is important for the faculty to seek confirmation that their selection process is not unintentionally favoring a particular group or type of students. The high drop-out rate, although traditional to the faculty, was alarming to the international members of the PRG while they recognized that it is largely due to a positive policy of equal access to the faculty. Recently faculty minimum grades for the first year were lowered from 7,0 to 6,0 increasing the number of eligible students for further studies substantially (from 55 students in 2003 upto 130 students in 2004). Nevertheless the PRG recommends that the faculty examine critically if this system of open-access and high drop-out is the best solution taking into account the strain on resources both among staff members and also among the large proportion of students that will have assigned their time and energy in vain. General knowledge tests, such as in the faculty of medicine, with public quotas on student numbers annually could be a consideration for the faculty.

Students seem represented in all relevant bodies of faculty administration. Students seem to a considerable extent responsible for their own studies, especially in the first year, which is presumably an explanatory factor in the high drop-out rate. The PRG suggests that this situation can create an unwelcome situation in the first year where there is not enough pressure on faculty staff to deliver teaching of the highest quality as there exists an implicit agenda to cut student numbers. A more service oriented approach is advised which in turn could put strain on the current system of open-access and high drop-out.

The PRG experienced a discrepancy on the one hand between the results of student course evaluation presented in the faculty self-evaluation report, that were below university average, and the fairly positive comments of the student groups during the site-visit on the other hand. The PRG suggests that faculty authorities analyze this matter formally and seek explanations for this apparent discrepancy. Again, overall increased emphasis on data gathering and analysis is proposed.

9.1 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- Sufficient statistical information regarding students is lacking
- High drop-out rate, although traditional to the faculty, was alarming to the international members of the PRG
- Situation can create an unwelcome situation in the first year where there is not enough pressure on faculty staff to deliver quality teaching
- PRG experienced a discrepancy between official faculty results of student course evaluation and comments of the student groups during the site-visit

Recommendations

- Recommends that faculty examine critically if its system of open-access and high drop-out is the best student selection method taking into account the strain on resources, as well as future faculty mission statements regarding student output to society
- A more service oriented approach is advised, although it might in turn put strain on the current system of open-access and high drop-out
- Faculty authorities should analyze formally the discrepancy described above and seek explanations

10 Staff and human resources management

The attention of the PRG was drawn to the very wide use of non-tenured staff in the faculty. It is important that faculty authorities take special notice of this trend and manage it as successfully as possible. It is suggested that emphasis should be put on integrating non-tenured staff members further into the faculty, f.ex. by involving them in research projects and engaging them more with students in out-of-classroom situations. The high faculty dependency on non-tenured staff seems not compatible with the faculty focus on academic studies as they are presumably more pragmatic in scope. However this could be managed with more integration into faculty.

There was a general consensus among tenured staff that administration duties took too much of their time. This is not surprising to the PRG following the earlier mention of limited faculty administrative capacity. It is recommended that faculty and university authorities address this issue and seek solutions.

Regarding the general employment policy it was clear that there exists a progression system for the university as a whole that the faculty follows. The PRG was unable to discover clear appointment criteria for the faculty.

Overall the PRG regards the tenured teaching staff of the faculty as relatively well qualified, most with some international academic experience. However the PRG would suggest to the faculty to encourage staff to complete Ph.D. degrees, as the proportion of staff members with Ph.D. degrees is low in an international perspective. The faculty could develop an explicit policy on this issue and promote the completion of such studies among staff members. For instance, sabbatical leaves could be systematically used to this end.

As previously mentioned a system of student course evaluation, including the evaluation of teachers, has been in place at the faculty for many years. The PRG commends this and urges further development of this kind of quality assurance, for example by formalizing and developing the staff interviews, recently introduced at the faculty (see chapter 4), and use the results from the course evaluations as an important part of these interviews. At the same time the PRG suggests that informal discussions, either with staff or students, cannot form the sole basis for any conclusions regarding important issues within the faculty, such as student views towards their faculty. A more formal and systematic approach is needed to grasp and tackle such issues sufficiently. In addition to the course evaluation and presumably imminent faculty staff interviews, teachers are subjected to the general research point system. The PRG suggests faculty authorities consider promoting internal faculty sessions of best practice, as previously mentioned in relation with student assessment.

Overall the PRG was pleased with the positive attitude of staff members towards their faculty. The main concern of staff was the heavy administrative burden in their daily work.

10.1 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- PRG was pleased with the positive attitude of staff members towards their faculty
- Use of non-tenured staff is high in the faculty
- Tenured staff administration duties take too much of their time
- Faculty teaching staff is relatively well qualified, most with some international academic experience
- Student evaluation of teachers has been in place at the faculty for many years. The PRG commends this and urges further development

Recommendations

- Emphasis should be put on integrating non-tenured staff members
- Encourage staff to complete PhD degrees, as the proportion of staff members with PhD degrees is low in an international perspective
- Develop formal staff interviews, recently introduced at the faculty
- Consider promoting internal faculty sessions of best-practice

11 Facilities

The PRG received a tour of the faculty facilities at *Lögberg*. The general consensus was that facilities were good, in particular staff offices and lecture halls, although students expressed their dissatisfaction with lecture facilities in their first year of study at the faculty. The main concern of the PRG related to the faculty library. It is suggested that both the range and depth of volumes in the library are insufficient for a national law school. In addition to Icelandic literature, it contains a selection of the main Nordic works, but other foreign material is relatively poorly represented. Also, the opening hours and borrowing policies of the library seemed restrictive, in particular for part-time and mature students who presumably would use the library on non-office hours, and should be reconsidered by faculty authorities. Resources should be made available to the faculty to bolster this important aspect of its activities. The faculty intranet system is however commendable and to the highest international standards.

The attention of the PRG was drawn to the fact that there were only approximately 20-25 PC computers for students in *Lögberg*, which seems a limited number for up to 500 student faculty. However, the ownership of laptop computers seems very common among Icelandic students and therefore this may not be a problem. To further accommodate computer access by laptop computers, the faculty is equipped with a wireless Internet connection, which is commendable. As mentioned above, the PRG was particularly impressed with the faculty intranet, where individual courses could be managed and relevant information disseminated to students and feedback received from them (f.ex. regarding course evaluation results) in a seemingly effortless manner.

There is a strong consensus among the PRG that the faculty seems under funded. This situation was similarly expressed by faculty authorities, and university authorities as the funding to the faculty per student is the lowest in the university. The PRG was worried by faculty statements regarding for example the faculty inability to offer respected foreign lecturers due to limited funding. It is the view of the PRG that the faculty needs to be able to serve its mission towards Icelandic society by providing such lectures on a regular basis and for example hold specialized seminars of particular interest, even with support from actors outside the university.

In the view of the PRG it is important for the faculty to develop a graduate programme within the next few years, which will form an integral part of strengthening the academic and research based focus of the faculty. University authorities need to support these developments.

11.1 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- Faculty facilities generally good
- The main concern of the PRG related to the faculty library
- Impressed with faculty intranet and wireless internet connection
- Strong consensus among the PRG that the faculty seems under funded, must be worrying for a national law school

Recommendations

- Resources should be made available to the faculty to bolster library
- It is suggested that both the range and depth of volumes in the library are insufficient for a national law school
- Solutions must be sought with relevant authorities regarding apparent under funding of the faculty
- University authorities need to support these developments

12 Administration

The PRG has previously mentioned the lack of administrative resources within the faculty. The current limited resources seem insufficient to for example gather and analyze data regarding student and alumni progression, development of the internship programme and student backgrounds or drop-out, to name a few limited examples. This situation is not satisfactory for a national law school and has for instance had affect on this PRG evaluation exercise, as previously mentioned. Especially the statistical data and analysis provided in the faculty self-evaluation report were not sufficient.

It is an important element of modern management techniques to be able to quickly analyze and respond to changes in the most important variables in their environment. This is an issue that needs to be solved in cooperation between faculty and university authorities.

Overall management of studies in the faculty as well as management of specific study options are the responsibility of tenured faculty staff. Students seem fairly represented in all relevant faculty bodies and displayed overall satisfaction with their formal status within faculty administration.

12.1 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- General feeling of lack of administrative resources
- Tenured staff bear much administrative responsibility

Recommendations

- Lack of administrative resources should be solved in cooperation between faculty and university authorities

13 Research and development work

The PRG urges the faculty to consider a collective research approach, as previously discussed regarding policy issues in chapter 3. It is suggested that more emphasis on faculty level should be put on most if not all faculty contributing to one or a few common theme(s) in their research, although individual faculty members will approach any such themes from their own fields of academic specialization. Such a common theme could for instance be international environmental law which would create a platform for an area of excellence which the faculty could market internationally both to attract talent and build recognition. The PRG recognizes that the faculty is already moving in this direction with the introduction of the LL.M. course in international and environmental law. The university law institute may be a useful framework to focus research activity within the faculty, but in general the PRG received limited insight into the activity and scope of the institute. Emphasis should be put on marketing this faculty research area of expertise to attract foreign scholars and staff in addition to students.

Regarding research in general, the PRG commends the faculty work in producing necessary Icelandic textbooks in the field of law, but at the same time suggests the faculty in general consider if there should be a distinction between producing textbooks for students and the Icelandic legal environment as opposed to more focused and deeper research, in the proper sense of the word. It is a common situation within most law programmes that too much research emphasis is concentrated towards producing textbooks. In general the PRG believes that the faculty should put more emphasis than before on the latter, which seems a logical progression for the future, in particular as the faculty seeks to receive international recognition for leading research contributions in a particular chosen field of expertise. To that end, the faculty should increasingly target leading international law journals to publish research articles.

A sustainable research environment requires researchers on all levels, and a strong focus on creating new generations of researchers. An upgrading of the faculty as a research community therefore presupposes the creation of a graduate programme that the PRG has mentioned already before.

Connections between faculty research and study objectives could be observed by the PRG through the textbook writing for individual courses. In addition there were examples of courses being introduced due to particular research interests of faculty members, such as in human rights law. However, the students seemed not very well connected to the research activities of the faculty and were not aware of the research made at the faculty. The PRG encourages increased student participation in faculty research projects and was pleased to find interest in this regard both from faculty members and students. This further involvement of students could be made

part of faculty policy. The Cand. Juris thesis could be used to link students to general faculty research interests or area of expertise. This could prove beneficial both for students as well as the faculty in general. In addition, the PRG suggests faculty authorities consider regular faculty research seminars involving perhaps both faculty members and research students at master's level (LL.M.). Developments in this regard have already taken place within the faculty but the PRG suggests this aspect should be strengthened further, in particular as it could prove beneficial for the development of a graduate programme within the faculty.

The Cand. Juris thesis, according to some samples shown, qualitatively and quantitatively seems to be on the same level as in other Nordic law faculties. However, according to the student's group the supervision of the thesis work was not always sufficient.

From discussions with faculty staff members it was apparent that individual staff members were involved in various research projects mostly on a Nordic or European level. However, the PRG conclusions in this regard are hampered by the limited and very general data provided in the self-evaluation report. Research output in the faculty seems on average compared to other university faculties. The PRG received no breakdown of faculty resources regarding research financing.

13.1 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- PRG recognizes the faculty is already moving towards international research focus with the introduction of LL.M. programme
- Faculty research work in producing necessary Icelandic textbooks in the field of law commendable
- Connections between faculty research and study objectives could be observed, but seemed insufficient

Recommendations

- Faculty are urged to consider developing a common research theme in a niche area (such as international environmental law) with a view to establishing the faculty as an international centre of research excellence in the area.
- Emphasis should be put on marketing the chosen faculty research area(s) of expertise to attract foreign scholars, staff in addition to students
- Increasing emphasis on other research than basic textbook writing proposed
- Faculty should increasingly target leading international law journals to publish research articles to bolster international recognition in the faculty area(s) of expertise

- PRG encourages more active student participation in faculty research projects and was pleased to find interest in this regard both from faculty members and students
- PRG suggests faculty authorities consider regular faculty research seminars, involving perhaps both faculty members and research students
- Faculty is urged to develop a graduate programme within the faculty as soon as possible

14 External relations

Faculty relations with private, public and professional bodies within Icelandic society, it is suggested, should be formalized and organized more coherently, as already discussed regarding the internship scheme, for instance. The future development of the faculty is to a large extent dependent upon maintaining and strengthening its links to society which should be activated more effectively taking into account the new environment of legal education in Iceland.

Both with regard to the needs of the small Icelandic society and the faculty, the faculty should consider a closer cooperation with the new faculties in their areas of specialisation. The faculty seemed positive towards such cooperation.

The PRG received no indication that faculty relations with other faculties within the University of Iceland were anything but positive and increased emphasis within the faculty of advising students to attend courses in other university faculties seems to underscore that indication. This development is commended by the PRG and it suggests further strengthening, by making the cooperation more programmatic, as described more in detail above.

The PRG commends the faculty development in recent years of systematically opening up to international relations particularly by adjusting its programme to the Bologna model, offer courses in English and, most recently, launch the LL.M. programme. However, an even clearer internationalization of the faculty is suggested, for example through direct involvement in international research networks.

The faculty has relations with numerous other higher education institutions in Europe through the Erasmus student and teacher exchange programme. A comprehensive list of universities under agreement with the faculty was similarly presented to the PRG. No statistics concerning the working of these programmes was presented, but it seems that students use the exchange options fairly well.

The development of a graduate programme within the faculty, as recommended above, requires close cooperation with good foreign universities. The graduate programme could and should include periods of work abroad.

14.1 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

- Faculty development in recent years of systematically opening up to international relations commended, in particular by adjusting its programme to the Bologna model, offer courses in English and, most recently, launch the LL.M. programme
- Faculty positive towards co-operation with other law Icelandic law schools, within their respective fields of specialization
- Interdisciplinary focus of recent years within the faculty commendable and should be strengthened
- Successful introduction of faculty graduate programme dependant upon strong international co-operation

Recommendations

- Clearer internationalization of the faculty is suggested, for example through direct involvement in international research networks.
- Seek out universities that have specializations in international environmental law
- Faculty relations with private, public and professional bodies within Icelandic society, it is suggested, should be strengthened
- Faculty should remain positive towards co-operation with new Icelandic law schools in the future within their fields of specialization
- Faculty should seek international cooperation when developing its graduate programme

A Appendixes

A.1 PRG Guidelines from the ministry

Introduction

In recent years, in policy formation for higher education institutions in Iceland, emphasis has been placed upon increasing their autonomy and responsibility, and also upon strengthening their internal and external quality control. The Universities Act of 1998 stresses that higher education institutions bear the main responsibility for their activities, while the role of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is primarily to monitor that higher education institutions meet standards for teaching and fulfil their plans. In recent years the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has been developing methods to evaluate higher education, and in this context it has been an active participant in European and Nordic collaboration on evaluation of higher education. The ministry has carried out evaluations during the past few years of a number of higher education faculties. In 1999 the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture issued rules on quality control in higher education, which have been revised (see appendix).

The objective of quality control in higher education is to maintain and raise the quality of teaching in higher education institutions (HEIs), to improve the organisation of HEIs, to promote greater responsibility of HEIs for their own activities, and to ensure their competitiveness in the international arena.

This booklet contains guidelines for external review of undergraduate and graduate programmes offered at the Faculty of Law in the University of Iceland.

The guidelines are intended to serve two purposes:

- a) To guide the experts and hopefully lighten their work-load;
- b) To ensure the relative homogeneity of the external reviews initiated by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture by providing

some points to be considered and criteria to be used in making the evaluations.

The process described in these guidelines is outlined step by step. However, it is meant to guide the peer review group in its work but not to restrict it.

Aims and Objectives of External Review

According to the rules on quality control in higher education in Iceland the objectives of external review of higher education teaching are:

- To gather methodically information on the teaching carried out in the relevant institution/faculty in Iceland.
- To encourage the relevant institution/faculty to examine its policies and work, among other things by means of self-evaluation, and to enable it to have its strengths and weaknesses evaluated by outside experts.
- To gather information on whether the institution/faculty meets the standards required for its work.
- To elicit proposals from higher education institutions and independent experts on emphasis, policy and improvements in education in the relevant field.

External quality control of higher education teaching may cover an HEI as a whole, specific disciplines, departments, study programmes, faculties, or other specified units within the institution. External quality control may also extend to several HEIs or units at the same time. External quality control covers all factors concerned in teaching, including management, human resources, study assessment, student affairs and facilities.

In external review of teaching in higher education the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture stresses the following factors:

- The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for the implementation of the review.
- The relevant institution/faculty shall carry out a critical self-evaluation. It is important that the self-evaluation be a true evaluation of the activities, and not simply a collection of data for the reviewers.
- A review shall be carried out by external experts, who visit the relevant institution/faculty, and verify and criticise the self-evaluation report.
- The results of the external review shall be made public, demonstrating the accountability of higher education institutions to interested parties – students, the labour market, government and the public.

Within this framework certain factors are stressed:

- The role of the experts in the peer review group is primarily to throw light on and evaluate the perspectives of the self-evaluation, and not to investigate as such.
- The external review does not entail a comparison of institutions/faculties, nor the creation of a “league table”. The primary emphasis is upon evaluating the connection between objectives and performance. Higher education institutions in Iceland are of various kinds, with varying objectives and performance. The evaluation of higher education institutions is thus primarily a matter of how well they achieve their stated goals.
- Some emphasis is placed upon compilation of statistical data from the institution’s records, as such data can provide a picture of the performance of the relevant institution/faculty.
- It is important that the quality evaluation should specify the interested parties important in higher education (students, parents, alumni, employers, government and others parties who fund higher education), and how their expectations may be met. It should be borne in mind that the concept of *quality* may signify different things to different interested parties.
- By an external review, the aim is to encourage development within the relevant institution/faculty.

Approach of the External Review

Procedure

The process of an external review of a higher education institution is as follows:

- The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture notifies the relevant institution/faculty of the planned external review.
- The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture sends guidelines for self-evaluation to the relevant institution/faculty.
- The relevant institution/faculty carries out its self-evaluation, and submits a self-evaluation report to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (2-3 months).
- A peer review group makes a site visit to the relevant institution/faculty (1-5 days).
- The peer review group prepares a review report. Before the report is finalised, the relevant institution/faculty shall have the opportunity to comment on the factual content of the report.
- The peer review group submits its final report to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (two months after the visit).
- The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture promulgates the report of the peer review group on the ministry's website.

The peer review group

The peer review group is appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. The group is responsible for carrying out the external review. According to the rules on quality control in higher education appointments to a peer review group shall take account of the following:

- A peer review group shall comprise 3-6 people. The team shall include individuals who meet some of the following criteria: qualifications in the relevant field of scholarship, or extensive experience of university work, of quality control and of employing graduates.
- No member of the peer review group may have any connection to the institution evaluated.
- At least one of the group's members shall be employed outside Iceland.
- The work of a peer review group shall be subject to guidance and a letter of appointment from the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. It shall have a secretary who organises its work and writes its report. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture shall issue a schedule for the evaluation, its time-frame and its costs, and guidelines for self evaluation, and shall monitor the implementation of the review.

The following are the members of the peer review group for the external review of the Faculty of Law:

Bjarni Benediktsson, Attorney to the Supreme Court of Iceland. The chair of the peer review group.

Svali H. Björgvinsson, Human Resource Manager at KB Bank (Kaupthing Bank), Iceland.

Thomas Wilhelmsson, Professor and Vice Rector of the University of Helsinki.

Dermot Walsh, Professor of the University of Limerick Law School.

The secretary of the group is:

Unnar Hermannsson, Consultant at KPMG Consulting

Law education in Iceland

The foundation of the University of Iceland in 1911 marks the beginning of the modern Icelandic system of higher education. This first national university was established by merging three professional schools founded during the previous century: a school of theology, a school of medicine and a law school, and adding a new faculty of arts. Before that time Icelandic students had mainly travelled to Denmark for higher education.

The law school was established in 1908 and merged with the University of Iceland in 1911. From 1911 to 2001 legal training was offered only at the University of Iceland. At present four higher education institutions in Iceland offer law programmes: The University of Iceland, the Bifröst School of Business, Reykjavík University and the University of Akureyri.

This development has led to increased competition between higher education institutions offering law programmes, and influenced the debate on the quality of law programmes.

This external review focuses solely on the law programmes offered by the University of Iceland Faculty of Law.

Task of the Peer Review Group

In general the assignments of the peer review group are the following:

- The group is to form an opinion on the basis of information supplied by the faculty in the self-evaluation report, and by means of discussions held on the site, about the quality of education and the quality of the educational process, including the organization of education and the standard of the graduates. In making its evaluation, the peer review group will take the expectations of the students and of society into account, as far as possible.
- The group is to form an opinion on the connection between the faculty and the university, and to consider the connection to research conducted within the institution.

- The group is to make recommendations on how to improve the quality of the faculty.

Preparatory meeting/s of the peer review group

Verification of the self-evaluation report

The task of the peer review group is to verify and comment on the content of the self-evaluation report, as well as to respond to questions raised by the report and during the site visit. It is important to study the self-evaluation report carefully before the peer review group meets. The comments should focus on the following questions:

- Is the report sufficiently critical and analytical?
- Are the strengths and weaknesses clearly presented?
- Is any information missing?

Previous experience has shown that these elements are often lacking in self-evaluation reports. However, in examining the reports with these questions in mind the peer review group should not formulate its final judgement. This is a first impression, based on written information. During subsequent discussions and the site visit there will be time to form a more considered opinion.

Each member of the peer review group is requested to send his/her comments on the self-evaluation report to the secretary of the group by **April the 16th** . At the first meeting the secretary will summarize the comments of all peer review group members, and subsequently prepare an information sheet about the faculty, summarizing quantitative data and its principal characteristics, based on the self-evaluation. In addition the secretary of the group will formulate a draft version of the terms of reference for the site visit, for discussion at the preparatory meeting.

Formulation of the terms of reference

Every expert has implicit ideas about the quality of a curriculum or the qualities of the graduates. Individual terms of reference will also differ because of the different backgrounds and different experiences of the members of the group. It may therefore prove helpful if one of the first tasks at the meetings of the peer review group is to make implicit opinions explicit and to formulate common terms of reference, acceptable to all peer review group members. This would provide the framework for the group to evaluate the Faculty of Law.

In defining their terms of reference, the peer review group should always keep in mind that the aims and objectives as set forward by the Faculty of Law have to be the starting point for their evaluation. The intention is not to impose external criteria and/or standards, for example from a professional body. However, the peer review group must verify whether the aims and objectives proposed by the faculty are sufficiently clear, complete and academically rigorous.

During its meetings the peer review group will:

- discuss the self-evaluation report
- come to an agreement on its terms of reference
- decide upon a division of labour for the group

Possible topics for discussion

During the meetings, certain topics concerning the terms of reference will probably be brought up. One of the basic problems is how to evaluate the quality of education, or what the peer review group should be looking for. This involves at least four questions:

- Are the goals and aims clearly formulated?
- How are these goals and aims translated into the curricula?
- Do student assessments and examinations reflect the content of the programmes and courses?
- Does a graduate have the expected knowledge, skills and attitudes?

These factors defining quality are further formulated in the following figure:

Stated goals and aims	→	Translation of goals/aims in curricula	→	Reflections of programme contents in examinations and assignments	→	The graduate: what did he/she acquire with regard to: a) knowledge b) skills c) attitudes
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The peer review group is also asked to take the following questions into consideration:

- Are the programmes offered by the Faculty of Law of sufficient academic standard from an international perspective?
- Are law graduates from the Faculty of Law well prepared for the labour market?
- Should any subject areas/study fields be more strongly emphasized in the curriculum?

- How does the research aspect of law function in the faculty?

Quality is a concept which can be interpreted in many ways. We cannot speak of “quality”; we have to speak about qualities, or aspects of quality. The consequence is that a peer review group has to look for the requirements of the different stakeholders: the students, the academic community, employers, government, and society at large. This is difficult to judge at first, without spending a great deal of time in lectures and seminars, but that is not the role of the peer review group.

Indirectly, an opinion can be formed by drawing on the comments of students with respect to the educational provision, the extent to which the lecturers are able to receive teacher training, and the extent to which teaching skills are taken into account in the appointment and promotion of staff. These are aspects to discuss with staff and students.

The quality of the educational programmes is further determined by the content and level of the subject matter taught. The content is again strongly dependent on the objectives and the manner in which these are translated into final student assignments. To a certain extent, the course description gives some insight into the course content. Questions which can be asked in this context are related to the consistency of the programmes and the underlying philosophy.

The given restraints and educational policy also determine the quality of the educational programme. What are the conditions under which the degree programme must give shape to the educational process? What is the relationship between teaching and research? What is the situation concerning study load? What policy is followed with respect to education? An important aspect of educational organization and management is the structural quality control. In what ways are these attended to? What is done as a result of evaluations?

The relationship between education and research

The main emphasis of this review is on teaching. Nonetheless, the link between teaching and research is characteristic for a university, and

hence educational quality cannot be evaluated without taking this link into account. Questions like: "How do students come into contact with research? What role does research play in the programmes?" cannot be avoided and must be answered during the review. The evaluation of research projects or research programmes as such is not part of the terms of reference of the peer review group.

The Site Visit

The site visit schedule for the institution should include the following:

1. Initial meeting with the university authorities

The visits should start with an introductory meeting with the rector (president) of the institution and senior members of the administration. During this meeting the mandate and objectives of the peer review group should be presented.

2. Meeting with the self-evaluation group

During this meeting the peer review group can inquire about points made in the self-evaluation reports, and request clarification and explanation.

3. Meeting with representatives of the student body

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture receives nominations for student representatives from the student organisations, approximately three from each cohort. The students are a rich source of information, but the information needs to be compared with the ideas of the staff members. Student interviews are important for gaining insight into the work load, the teaching qualifications of the staff, the coherence of the programme, whether they are familiar with the goals and aims of the curricula, and the organization of the curricula and the facilities. Interviews with students should be held in the absence of staff members so that the students may speak freely.

4. Meeting with law graduates

The peer review group will meet approximately three lawyers who have graduated within the last 10 years.

5. Meeting with staff members other than the self-evaluation group

The meeting with the staff should be divided into two sessions, one with permanent members of the faculty who are not members of the self-evaluation group, and second with instructors or temporary members of the teaching staff. These meetings will be used for a discussion on the content of the curricula, aims and objectives. Other topics to be discussed are: the manner of student assessment, examinations, students' work, research projects etc.

6. Examination of facilities

Part of the programme of the site visit should be dedicated to examining facilities: lecture halls, working group rooms, laboratories, practical rooms, libraries etc. For the visit to the facilities, the peer review group could be split up.

7. Final meeting with the university authorities

The visit should conclude with a discussion between the peer review group and those representatives of the university authorities who participated in the initial meeting. It may be the case that the peer review group find it relevant at this time to present its preliminary impressions. In that case the peer review group should use the occasion to discuss the main elements of its findings. It is at this point in the evaluation that the peer review group can have a personal discussion about a number of things, since the public report will not include any of the elements involving individuals.

The Final Report

It is important that the peer review group spend some time at end of each day to formulate its findings. The group will also be able to spend time together after the visits in order to sum up for the report.

After the site visit, the secretary will write a first draft of the faculty, drawing on peer review group member comments and minutes of the meetings. The secretary will use a format for the report that is compatible with the format and structure of the guidelines for self-evaluation. The draft report will be distributed among the members of the peer review group for additions and comments. The final version will then be sent to the institution for clarification of factual errors. The peer review group will decide how to deal with any comments from the faculty. The final report of the peer review group shall be completed within two months of the end of the site visit.

The following is a suggestion for the format of the peer review group report, based on the items of the *Guidelines for self-evaluation*. The peer review group may choose to structure its report in a different way, combine some items, omit others or include new ones.

Checklist on structure and approach of the peer review report

1. Introduction

- The peer review group
- Terms of reference
- Working method
- Short evaluation of the review

2. The faculty's policy and objectives

- Official objectives of the university
- Research policy and objectives regarding teachers' research
- Policy on connection between research/scholarship and teaching
- Policy on students' on-the-job training (if applicable)
- Policy on weight of individual study factors
- Connection of quality policy with the formal quality assurance system of the university

3. Internal quality assurance of the faculty

- Organisation of internal quality evaluation
- Measures on the quality of study/teaching
- Students' involvement in internal quality evaluation

4. Structure and content of study programmes

- Organisation of study programmes (undergraduate, postgraduate, Ph.D)
- Connection between objectives and courses
- Connection of study material to teaching
- Relative emphasis on Icelandic and foreign-language teaching materials

5. Teaching and teaching methods

- Organisation of the programme and responsibility for instruction
- Teaching methods, e.g. proportional weight of assignments, lectures and seminars
- Support for students, e.g. regarding study methods and skills
- Connection between regular instruction and on-the-job training (if applicable)

6. On-the-job training (if applicable)

- Duration and timing of on-the-job training during the study process
- Preparation of students for on-the-job training
- Preparation of tutors and teachers supervising students in on-the-job training
- Tasks of students in on-the-job training
- Organisation, responsibility and monitoring of on-the-job training by the higher education institution
- Guidance, counselling and on-site instruction of students in on-the-job training
- Connections to other studies
- Student evaluation of on-the-job training

7. Student assessment

- Methods and tools for student assessment (NB distance learning if applicable)
- Frequency of examinations
- Responsibility for content of examinations, and examination requirements
- Connections between student assessment and objectives

8. Students

- Student numbers/interpretation of statistical data: e.g. trends in student numbers, number of new enrolments, graduates, and place of residence, gender and age.

- Admission requirements and selection of entrants.
- Drop-out rate
- Progress of study, duration of study
- Results of study
- Teachers' guidance
- Students' right to influence study
- Students' responsibility for their own studies.
- Student attitudes to the faculty
- Students' progress after graduation (e.g. vis-à-vis employment, salary, postgraduate study)

9. Staff and human resources management

- Staffing: number and composition
- Division of teachers' responsibilities in teaching, administration, research (utilisation of teachers' specialist skills)
- Employment policy (e.g. appointments, termination, job security, autonomy), renewal, training, ongoing education of staff etc.
- Teachers' qualifications and experience
- Methods of evaluating teachers, e.g. teaching evaluation
- Application of the findings of teaching evaluation to personnel management
- Staff attitudes to the faculty

10. Facilities

- Lecture halls, laboratories, libraries, computer rooms etc.
- Infrastructural support
- Budget and sources of funding

11. Administration

- Overall management of studies
- Management of specific study options

- Management of on-the-job training (if applicable)
- Students' right of appeal
- Methods of monitoring students' progress

12. Research and development work

- Connection between teachers' research projects and study objectives
- Connection between research and teaching and student assignments
- Co-ordination of projects and co-operation on research
- Teachers' and students' links to research agencies
- Teachers' activity in research
- Promulgation of findings of teachers' research
- Principal means of funding research
- Financing of research

13. External relations

- Faculty's contacts with private, public and professional bodies
- Consultation with external parties concerning new programme offerings
- Contacts with other institutions of higher education, nationally and abroad
- Participation in international student-exchange programmes
- International links and collaboration agreements between the institution/faculty and other parties
- Relations with other faculties with the institution

14. Summary of findings

- Main conclusions and recommendations

A.2 Rules on Quality Control in Higher Education

No. 666 12 September 2003

RULES on quality control in higher education

I. Objectives

Art. 1

The objective of quality control in higher education is to maintain and raise the quality of teaching in higher education institutions (HEIs), to improve the organisation of HEIs, to promote greater responsibility of HEIs for their own activities, and to ensure their competitiveness in the international arena.

II. Quality assurance systems in higher education institutions

Art. 2

An HEI shall fulfil its obligations to monitor quality of teaching by having a formal quality assurance system. One aspect of this is systematic internal evaluation by the HEI, or units within it, and formal consideration of the evaluation by the HEI, with the purpose of improving teaching. The work of teachers shall also be systematically evaluated. The HEI shall promulgate a description of its quality assurance system. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture may at any time request information relating to the quality assurance system.

III. External quality control

Art. 3

External quality control of higher education teaching may cover an HEI as a whole, specific disciplines, departments, study programmes, faculties, or other specified units within the institution. External quality

control may also extend to several HEIs or units at the same time. External quality control covers all factors concerned in teaching, including management, human resources, study assessment, student affairs and facilities.

An HEI shall meet the expenses of its self-evaluation from its funding. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture meets the costs of external review.

Art. 4

The Minister of Education, Science and Culture determines when an external review shall take place as provided in these rules, and what the focus of the review shall be. The minister shall appoint for this purpose a peer review group, which shall be responsible for carrying out the review. Appointments to a peer review group shall take account of the following:

- a. A peer review group shall comprise 3-6 people. The group shall include individuals who meet some of the following criteria: qualifications in the relevant field of scholarship, or extensive experience of work in higher education, of quality control and of employing graduates.
- b. No member of the peer review group may have any links to the institution evaluated.
- c. At least one member of the group shall be employed outside Iceland.

The work of a peer review group shall be subject to guidance and a letter of appointment from the Minister of Education, Science and Culture, and it shall have a secretary who organises its work and writes its report. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture shall issue a schedule for the review, its time-frame and its costs, and guidelines for self-evaluation, and shall monitor the implementation of the review.

Art. 5

The rector of the HEI appoints a self-evaluation group and its chair. The chair organises and is responsible for the self-evaluation, and writing of the self-evaluation report. He/she also liaises with bodies inside and outside the relevant HEI and organises the peer review group's site-visit. The self-evaluation group shall comprise at least four and not more

than six members, who shall correctly reflect the internal organisation of the unit being evaluated. They shall all work within the relevant unit, and the group shall include representatives of faculty, students and administration.

Art. 6

After self-evaluation has been completed the peer review group visits the institution, verifies the self-evaluation report, examines other factors it may deem necessary, and submits a report on its findings. The peer review group shall complete its report within two months of the conclusion of the visit to the HEI. Before the peer review group submits its final report, representatives of the relevant HEI shall be given the opportunity to comment upon the factual content of the report. The peer review group shall consider the HEI's comments and then complete its report for submission to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

Art. 7

The report of the peer review group shall be promulgated in its entirety. Within three months of the promulgation of the final report, the relevant HEI shall promulgate its report on its response to the findings. Within two years of that time the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture shall ascertain whether and how the HEI has responded to the findings of the external review.

Art. 8

These rules are issued on the basis of authority provided in para. 1 art. 5 of the Universities Act no. 136/1997, and they shall take effect immediately. Rules no. 331/1999 on quality control in higher education teaching shall also be abrogated from that time.

Ministry of Education, Science and Culture 12 September 2003.

Davíð Oddsson.

Guðmundur Árnason.

A.3 Agenda for PRG site-visit

Higher Education External Review

Faculty of Law – University of Iceland

The Preperation Meetings

April 26th and April 29th 2004

Monday April 26th 2004

10:00-12:00	Meeting of the peer review group
12:00-13:00	Lunch
13:00-14:30	Meeting of the peer review group
14:30-15:00	Coffee
15:00-17:00	Meeting of the peer review group

Thursday April 29th 2004

8:00-12:00	Meeting of the peer review group
12:00-13:00	Lunch
13:00-14:30	Meeting of the peer review group
14:30-15:00	Coffee
15:00-17:00	Meeting of the peer review group

**The Site-Visit
April 27th and April 28th**

University of Iceland

Tuesday April 27th 2004^h

- 09:00-09:45 **First meeting with the university authorities** (Main building)
- Magnús Diðrik Baldursson rector's assistant
- Pórður Kristinsson, director of teaching
- Halldór Jónsson, director of research
- Guðmundur R. Jónsson, director of operational and executive affairs
-
- 10:00-11:30 **Meeting with the self-evaluation group** (Lögberg)
- Prof. Eiríkur Tómasson, dean. Chair of the group
- Prof. Páll Hreinsson, vise-dean
- Björg Thorarensen, professor
- Skúli Magnússon, associate professor
- Kolbrún Linda Ísleifsdóttir, office manager
- Berglind Bára Sigurjónsdóttir, student and vice-president of Orator, the association of law students at the University of Iceland
-
- 11:30-12:00 **Short meeting of the peer review group**

12:00-13:00	Lunch with the rector
13:15-14:30	Meeting with representatives of the student body Jóhannes Eiríksson 1. year Birkir Jóhannsson 1. year Marta Rúnarsdóttir 2. year Jóhanna Katrín Magnúsdóttir 3. year Dröfn Kærned 3. year Hervör Pálsdóttir 4. year Kristín Þórðardóttir 4. year Guðríður Svana Bjarnadóttir 5. year Ásgerður Ragnarsdóttir 5. year Árni Sigurjónsson graduated 2003 Sigbrúður Ármann graduated 2003
14:30-15:00	Coffee
15:00-16:00	Meeting of the peer review group

University of Iceland

Wednesday April 28th 2004^h

- 09:00-10:00 **Meeting with temporary members of the teaching staff**
- Adjunct lecturer Jóhannes Karl Sveinsson and attorney of the Supreme Court
- Adjunct lecturer Jónína S. Lárusdóttir (Ministries of Industry and Commerce)
- Símon Sigvaldason district judge of the District Court of Reykjavík
- Adjunct lecturer Þórdís Ingadóttir
- 10:00-11:00 **Meeting with permanent members of the teaching staff**
- Professor Jónatan Þórmundsson
- Professor Ragnheiður Bragadóttir
- Professor Viðar Már Matthíasson
- Assistant professor Aðalheiður Jóhannsdóttir
- 11:00-12:00 **Short meeting of the peer review group**
- 12:00-13:00 **Lunch with the rector**
- 13:15-14:15 **Looking at the facilities**
- Supervision: Prof Eiríkur Tómasson, dean, professor Björg Thorarensen and professor Viðar Már Matthíasson.

14:30-15:30 **Final meeting with the university authorities**

Páll Skúlason, rector

Magnús Diðrik Baldursson, rector's assistant

Þórður Kristinsson, director of teaching

Halldór Jónsson, director of research

Guðmundur R. Jónsson, director of operational and executive affairs

15:30-16:00 **Short meeting of the peer review group**

A.4 List of documents received

- Self Evaluation Report, Faculty of Law, University of Iceland, 2004
- Strengthening of the University of Iceland, Aims and Measures 2002-2005 (brochure)
- Summary of the situation concerning the approval of new programmes of study, the accreditation of new programmes and institutions of higher education, and innovations in quality assurance at Icelandic university level institutions since 2001 (draft)
- Programme of International Legal Studies, Faculty of Law, University of Iceland (brochure)
- Master of Laws in International and Environmental Law, Faculty of Law, University of Iceland (brochure)
- Reglur fyrir Háskóla Íslands nr. 458/2000, XII kafli um lagadeild, m.br..
- Reglur um BA-nám í lögfræði við lagadeild Háskóla Íslands
- Reglur um kjörgreinar við lagadeild Háskóla Íslands
- Minnisblað Páls Hreinssonar og Viðars Más Matthíassonar, dags. 10. október 2002, um samræmingu á námsefni o.fl. í kjörgreinum
- Reglur um kandidatsritgerðir og önnur lokaverkefni til embættisprófs í lögfræði
- Reglur um munnleg próf í lagadeild
- Reglur lagadeildar um hlutverk of verkefni umsjónarkennara
- Reglur um æfingaskyldu stúdenta við lagadeild
- Reglur um gögn sem stúdentar í lagadeild Háskóla Íslands mega hafa með sér í skriflegum prófum
- Reglur um námsvist stúdenta í lagadeild
- Reglur um meistaranám í þjóðarétti og umhverfisrétti (LL.M.)
- Reglur lagadeildar um tilhögun meistaranáms og brautskráningu meistaraþrófnema í sjávarútvegsfræðum og umhverfisfræðum

- Eldri reglur fyrir Háskóla Íslands nr. 458/2000, XII. kafli um lagadeild
- Eldri reglur um kjarnanám stúdenta í lagadeild
- Eldri reglur um kjörnám stúdenta í lagadeild
- Curriculum Vitae of professor Jónatan Þórmundsson, Faculty of Law, University of Iceland